



February 27, 2012

Nathalie R. Asher, Director
Seattle Field Office
Immigration Customs and Enforcement
12500 Tukwila International Blvd
Seattle, WA 98168-2506

RE: Exercise of Prosecutorial Discretion and Stay of Deportation on behalf of Al Okere

Dear Director Asher:

The Seattle Human Rights Commission, established in 1963, has historically provided guidance to the City of Seattle from an objective and independent viewpoint grounded in the City's commitment to upholding human rights. We work to end discrimination based upon race, religion, creed, color, national origin, sexual orientation, political ideology, ancestry, age, marital and parental status, disability, and retaliation.

In this capacity, the Commission writes in support of Al Okere's request to the Immigration Customs and Enforcement that it exercise its power of prosecutorial discretion and issue a stay of deportation and not enforce Al Okere's order of removal.

We believe that in addition to the many personal and humanitarian factors in this case supporting the exercise of prosecutorial discretion, there is also a compelling human rights issue to consider. This issue is the fundamental principle set forth in Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that reflects the commitment of the international community to ensure to all persons: the right to life; the right to liberty and security of person; and the right to freedom from torture or cruel, inhumane, or degrading treatment or punishment.

Returning Mr. Okere to a country where he faces potential harm or death is a violation of these fundamental human rights.

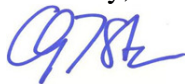
In addition to the human rights concerns present in this case, we believe that Mr. Okere's case is a solid candidate for prosecutorial discretion due to the length of time he has resided in the United States, his lack of ties to Nigeria, his strong ties and involvement within our community, his pursuit of education, and his good moral character. Mr. Okere and his mother fled to the U.S. after Nigerian police assassinated his father when Mr. Okere was only five years old. His only tie to Nigeria is his mother, who lives in fear on a daily basis and is in hiding.

Despite these horrific circumstances early in his life, during his time in the United States Mr. Okere became a productive and responsible member of his community in Washington. He currently attends Central Washington University where he has consistently made the dean's list as a pre-medical student. Furthermore, if and when the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act (DREAM Act) passes, Mr. Okere would meet all the requirements to qualify for a green card. Mr. Okere's situation serves as a reminder that there is an urgent need for change in our nation's immigration laws that are humane, fair, and just. Mr. Okere does not pose a threat to public safety or national security and is an example of the type of person who should be prioritized for prosecutorial discretion under the Morton Memo, issued on June 17, 2011.

We urge Immigration and Customs Enforcement to use this discretion and allow Mr. Okere to continue to pursue higher education and serve his community in Washington State.

For further information or clarification, please contact the Commission's staff person, Felicia Yearwood at (206) 684-4537 or Felicia.Yearwood@seattle.gov.

Sincerely,



Christopher Stearns, Chair
Seattle Human Rights Commission

cc: Representative Jim McDermott
Senator Patty Murray
Senator Maria Cantwell